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## BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH - ANALYSIS - AUGUST 25, 1982

1. LEBANON: A NEW PRESIDENT FACES OLD PROBLEMS

Coercive tactics brought about Bashir Gemayel's election as president. The application of such pressure, which was necessary to achieve the 62-deputy quorum required to begin the voting process, does not bode well for national reconciliation. Indeed, it is likely to widen divisions between Muslims and Christians and therefore provide an additional reason for the Israelis to prolong their occupation.

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The Phalange's resort to bribery and intimidation is not likely to produce an immediate backlash in the form of generalized sectarian strife. Nonetheless, most Muslims will attribute Bashir's election to the reduction of PLO and Syrian influence in the Beirut area rather than to country-wide support for the Phalange among non-Christian elites. Consequently, Bashir will begin his presidency with little more mandate than the military power of his militia.

Traditional rivalries between Lebanese factions and the presence of 400,000 Palestinians ~~will continue to hamper the process~~ of national reconciliation and reinforce sectarian tension. Continued Syrian and Israeli intervention will exacerbate these problems. Moreover, Israel's insistence on a central government responsive to Israeli interests will complicate Bashir's commitment to the Phalange Party's longstanding ideal: the preservation of a unified Lebanese state free of foreign influence.

Even without the Israeli connection, Muslims and Druse are deeply suspicious of Bashir's ambitions. These groups may share the Phalange's view of a Lebanon freed from foreign influence, but they do not accept a Maronite-dominated state. Unless Bashir demonstrates a willingness to share power, institute reforms, and distance himself from the Israelis, Muslims will not support him. Even then, the peculiar nature of Lebanon's confessional system and the lack of a strong sense of national identity will obstruct progress toward a unified and stable Lebanese state.

Bashir's elevation thus is likely to make Muslims even more mistrustful of the state's institutions. The Lebanese Armed Forces, in particular, will probably be seen as an arm of the Phalange. This could make it difficult for the Lebanese army to function effectively in Muslim areas following the PLO's evacuation of Beirut.

State Dept. review completed